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ABSTRACT

This document contains a summary of the European Community (EC) Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth's reactions to a 1991 memorandum on vocational training in the EC in the 1990s. The memorandum was issued by the Commission of the European Communities to initiate broad debate within and among EC member nations. A third-party analysis of EC members' responses to the memorandum is also provided. Included in the summary of task force observations are the following: summary of the process of discussing/debating the memorandum within and among the individual EC member nations, discussion of fundamental themes emerging from the debate, list of points of consensus among individual EC members, and possible courses of action emerging from the debate. The report of the third-party analysis, which constitutes the majority of the document, explains the method used to conduct the analysis and identifies issues in vocational training and EC members' procedures regarding anticipating needs, responding to new needs, planning/delivering initial and continuing training, assuming responsibility for vocational training at the national level, providing access, and meeting expectations. Appended are a list of the documents examined and the analytical grid of national contributions that was used to conduct the analysis. (MN)

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EDUCATION
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Studies

No 3

Vocational training in the European Community: *Challenges and future outlook*

Follow-up to the Commission memorandum on vocational training in the European Community in the 1990s

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This document contains:

-First, reactions and observations, according to the debate, by the Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth of the European Communities.

-Second, an Analysis of the contributions produced by TEMPO communication drawn up as a reaction to the memorandum on vocational training.

- **Reactions and observations by the Commission**

REACTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

1.The aim of the Commission Memorandum on Vocational Training in the EC in the 1990s[1] was to open up the broadest possible debate among all the players concerned on the importance and scope of vocational training policies in the Member States and at Community level.

2.This initial objective has been amply attained through a process of discusssion and analysis at several levels, and which has produced a wealth of different contributions or stances. The Commission thus has to hand additional material in terms of reactions and proposals which is extremely useful at a time when the guidelines and practicalities of Community action in this area are being redefined.

3.The main stages of this process have been:

-the organisation in nearly all the Member States (only one Member State has not yet been able to do so) of discussion meetings around the Memorandum under the aegis of the national authorities and involving the main players, particularly the two sides of industry;

-the production by all countries of national reactions to the Memorandum. These contributions are generally the result of a prior consultation at national level and constitute reference documents with regard to national stances. They sometimes present extremely comprehensive political standpoints on fundamental issues such as subsidiarity or the definition of vocational training;

-the organisation by the two sides of industry at Community level of workshops around themes raised by the Memorandum. These meetings have also yielded a preliminary approach to the new bases provided by the Treaty on European Union and on the points to be examined for its implementation;

-the preparation and adoption by the Economic and Social Committee, of an information report[2] on the themes dealt with by the memorandum and highlighting the ESC's position on the importance of vocational training and its role in the construction of the Community;

-the adoption of a report by the European Parliament[3] presented in the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and the Working Environment after receiving the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and of the Committee on Culture, Education and Youth;

-the organisation by the Commission of meetings to follow up and examine the summary report on national contributions[4], held respectively with the national correspondents designated by the Directors General for vocational training, representatives designated by the ETUC and the UNICE, and a panel of practitioners involved in the action programmes.

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[1]Memorandum on Vocational Training in the EC in the 1990s (COM(91)397 final of 12 December 1991.
[2]"Vocational training: the promotion of vocational qualifications as strategic instrument of economic and social development in the European Community" - ECS 587/92 final.
[3]Report by the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and the Working Environment on vocational training in the European Community in the 1990s. EP 203.077/final.
[4]Follow up to the Memorandum on Vocational Training in the European Community in the 1990s - Interim report by the TFRH - February 1993.

4. It is difficult to sum up these rich and sometimes contradictory debates and standpoints in a few paragraphs, particularly as reactions and answers are extremely diversified in terms of level and content. This is in no way abnormal in that the Commission's Memorandum was intended as an open document to raise questions and in which the players providing the answers reflect very different levels of concern and interest. The diversity of the standpoints is itself an interesting result which, in addition to reflecting national positions, illustrates the wide range of expectations and viewpoints of the players in relation to vocational training and the Community's role in this area.

5.Three fundamental themes emerge from the overall corpus of reactions and have elicited an extremely diverse range of positions. On this basis it is possible to identify the areas where the Commission must continue to enhance and deepen the considerations and proposals in a context of sensitive and even politically delicate reactions:

- subsidiarity
-criticism of the over-emphasis on the economic considerations linked to vocational training
-globalising approaches to deal with different situations.

6.On the subject of subsidiarity, one group of countries argues in favour of a "restrictive" interpretation of subsidiarity whereas others are more open to a "more dynamic" vision such as that proposed by the Memorandum. In actual fact, this question opened by the Memorandum receives adequate answers in the provisions of Article 127 of the Treaty on European Union, which excludes any possibility of harmonising the national systems, recognises the Member States' full responsibility for the organisation and content of training and gives the Community the task of implementing a vocational training policy based on and supplementing action taken by the Member States. The application of these provisions should permit better links between Community action of a catalytic and innovative character on the one hand and the trends in the national systems on the other, particularly by bearing more closely on, through Community action, the fundamental elements and determining factors of the systems of the Member States.

7.Somewhat more delicate is the link-up between "public subsidiarity" and "social subsidiarity" and this will require an answer in terms of proposals and practice. The protocol on social policy attached to the Treaty on European Union does not formally include training and, in line with what the two sides of industry have wanted, the conditions for applying the spirit and the procedure of the protocol to the area of vocational training will have to be specified. Drafting the proposal on access to vocational training has revealed the difficulties but also the point of such an exercise. Given the importance of collective bargaining in these fields, it is no doubt necessary to consider public policy and the collective bargaining agreements between the two sides of industry as complementary and not subsidiary as regards many aspects of vocational training. The views of the two sides of industry in the working party on Education and Training under the Social Dialogue will significantly contribute to clarifying this question.

8.The criticism of over-emphasis on the economic aspects should be a basis for opening up the issues at stake and for taking account of the societal aspects more comprehensively. There will be increasingly less scope in the years ahead for dissociating viewpoints and action proposals linked with competitiveness and economic growth on the one hand and those linked with stemming the rise in employment and reducing social exclusion on the other. Convergence between economic aspects and the social aspects must be achieved within the very definition of the trends in vocational training in relation to technological innovation, its dissemination and its impact in terms of job creation and job destruction. There is also need for an improved analysis of the links between changes in qualifications and the creation of new jobs and for a better understanding of the positive and negative impacts of training on the process of exclusion.

9.The debate should also focus attention on the fact that scientific breakthroughs open up new dimensions and raise questions concerning certain socio-economic aspects of development. The examples of environmental protection, high-risk technologies such as nuclear technology, technology affecting human life, such as genetic engineering, all of which frequently raise ethical and societal problems, should be gone into in greater depth. Against this background training is not merely a vector of technological success, but the precondition for overall management and control of the societal consequences for the users, the recipients and also the political decision-makers.

10. The need to take account of the cultural dimensions should also enrich the approach. On the one hand, with regard to job qualifications and content, the so-called methodological, relational or social dimensions argue in favour of readjusting both the objectives and the methods of vocational training and its links with possible changes in the configurations of work organisation. On the other, the prospect of the process of lifelong education rather than purely initial training, raises the question of access and relations to knowledge making it possible to acquire the vocational skills needed for a more responsible role in work, and also the social skills which permit active participation and integration in society, contributing to the construction of citizenship. Lastly, more importance must undoubtedly be attached to the idea that qualifications and skills, i.e. the so-called human capital of each individual in his relations with society and the economy, are becoming the means which are essential to social integration and personal fulfilment. There is no doubt room for the development of a new area for thought and action centered on the continuing education of adults as one of the necessary dimensions of the process of lifelong learning.

11. Drafting the Memorandum was *per se* a globalising exercise designed to illustrate significant trends which could be generalised. Significantly, without questioning the existence of these trends, a number of reactions have drawn attention to the specific nature and the importance of more detailed analyses of the problems by reference, for instance, to regional situations or to given categories of people or enterprises. This argues in favour of dynamic processes of reciprocal enhancement between general projects and localised experiments rooted in the reality of the economic and social fabric.

12. The analyses of and the reactions to the Commission Memorandum have given the Member States the opportunity to express positions which reveal strong points of consensus which can be considered as trends in progress in most if not all the Member States, taking due account of course of the specific features of national systems and practices. These trends could become a reference point for defining objectives for future Community action, the guidelines for which have been set out in the working document which the Commission has just adopted[5].

13. These points of consensus could perhaps lead to future points of convergence. They do not reflect a rigid identity of these phenomena but rather questions which all Member States have to face:

a)The fundamental importance of basic education and initial training. By reaction and sometimes as a counterpoint to the Memorandum, which stressed the need to pay increasing attention to continuing training, certain comments recall the importance of good quality basic training as a precondition for integration on the labour market and later occupational advancement, and the danger of specialisation at too early a stage. The increasingly difficult situation experienced by all those who failed in or dropped out of the school system and the economic and social marginalisation linked with the inadequacy of initial training are recognised as structural factors and moreover occupy a significant place in the public measures taken in all the Member States. Community

[5]Commission working document: "Guidelines for education and training" - COM(93)

action for cooperation and exchange of experience seems destined to be stepped up on all aspects on these questions by reference to the indent of Article 127 relating to the quality of initial and continuing training.

b)Taking due account in training of the radical changes in job content and qualifications. The Member States are faced with a difficult task as regards the changes needed in their training systems - taking due account of their responsibility for the content of training programmes - to adapt training to rapid and perhaps increasingly radical changes in job content. The reference to technological factors and how quickly they change is confirmed in this respect. Increasing attention to the determinants will be needed in order to modernise the configurations of work organisation, particularly (in line with the comments from Germany) the relational, methodological and social qualifications and the capacity given to people to take charge of their own progress (learning to learn), and the transferability of qualifications, including throughout Europe.

c)Increasing concern for anticipation. The current economic climate of great uncertainty and the variable effects of determinants in defining types of training (e.g. technological innovation) are an increasing source of concern for all the players involved. The debate surrounding the methods and instruments whereby genuine capacity for anticipation can be developed is however wide open. Caution is advocated as regards the macroeconomic forecasting models and a wide range of experiments is cropping up in the Member States at various levels (sectoral and regional in particular). Developing this capacity for anticipation and transfering the results into the process of political decision making and the pedagogical organisation of training also warrant increased cooperation at Community level. Noteworthy here is the construction of operational interfaces between enterprises and training systems, particularly at the regional level.

d)The increased role of firms and of sandwich training. Consolidation of links between the world of training and firms features strongly and is the subject of an agreement by the two sides of industry. The effectiveness of action by firms to enhance the quality of training involves a whole range of conditions in these firms (tutoring, induction, partnerships, etc.) and in training organisations (transfers, technology outlook, teaching methods, etc.). The development of sandwich training for targeted recipient publics could no doubt by an excellent means of joint cooperation and consideration at the Community level.

e)Individualisation of training supply. Made-to-measure handling of problems as regards analysis of requirements, defining training routes and syllabuses, selection of the most appropriate type and method of training seems to be growing. This trend raises the question as to the capacity available in terms of funding and of vocational skills among practitioners. It is however a trend which is instrumental in achieving better effectiveness of resources committed both as regards public expenditure and corporate investment. The organisation and structuring of training supply with a view to integrating these new functions and the professionalism connected with counselling, auditing, analysis, and forecasting are a major consequence of this trend. Another consequence, this time affecting individuals, is the new scope given to them for defining and selecting training and which has effects in terms of insisting on quality, of evaluation, of positioning and of recognition of achievements. These trends would also require new partnerships for funding purposes.

f)The increasing recognition of the regional dimension. In the context of organisation of systems characterised by major differences, the local mechanisms for matching up training supply and demand play a growing role. This should make it possible to take

increasing account of the process of decentralisation of political and budgetary responsibilities which are cropping up everywhere, and also to encourage and support local adjustment systems which are one of the routes to better quality and effectiveness in terms of vocational training.

g)The recognition of the role of the social players. The growing recognition of the plurality of responsibilities of the players involved in and the need for increasing cooperation between them to ensure adjustments is symptomatic. Converging and putting in perspective the efforts of all those involved is being achieved, spurred on by the identification and formulation of common objectives, in the sense of "common targets", which can also constitute a perspective for Community catalytic action.

14.As regards Community action some conclusions and messages can also be drawn, particularly based on the debate the Commission has opened on the guidelines for Community action.

a)A first discussion concerns what the next few years will bring. Most of what was said in in the Memorandum was admittedly based on an assumption of continuing economic growth and on a decisive role for human resources as one of the drivers of this growth. In view of the current economic downswing in the Community, and indeed internationally, the points made might have to be reconsidered and the conclusions qualified. The guidelines set out in the Memorandum were looking ahead to the end of the century and therefore purport to offer a long-term rather than a short-term perspective. Nevertheless, the zero growth or even a lasting recession scenario imposes fundamental pondering of the new and increased roles of vocational training against this background, but also on certain limits of its effects in very segmented labour markets. This analysis must obviously be pursued by reference to the new macroeconomic and industrial policy guidelines, particularly in relation to recovery-programmes which favour infrastructures and structural change.

b)The need for more accurate definitions of vocational training and the repeated wish for common definitions is a striking result of the debates. This clarification is all the more necessary as the links between basic education and vocational training are getting closer. Substantial progress has to be made on methodology, an area which the work carried out under the Petra and Force programmes shows to be difficult. More generally, better and more detailed knowledge of the vocational training systems in the different countries and particularly how they are run is a priority objective. The guideline debates, whether conducted at the Community or at the national level, would be much improved if they were based on reference information familiar to and accepted by all the players involved. This objective is particularly important with a view to a periodic report on vocational training in Europe which the Commission intends to introduce.

c)The attempt to provide a strategic vantage point made by the Memorandum was considered useful by the players involved in the debates. Nevertheless, the reactions have shown that the shorter term concerns were very much in evidence and sometimes took precedence when defining policies and arrangements, particularly in view of the ever-worsening situation of the employment market. Link-up and consistency between long-term objectives and short-term action would undoubtedly enable the Community to improve its standing as a reference point. Public authorities in the Member States are obviously increasingly under pressure, including budgetary pressure, which spurs on the quest for immediate results. The Community must give priority to considering and developing more structural solutions in order to get to grips with the causes rather than the effects of the problems. The debate opened on the new objective of the Structural

Funds as regards industrial adaptation reflects this challenge but also offers arguments for strengthening the role of vocational training in the Community's structural action.

d)The concept of life-long learning put forward by the Commission offers a sound political expression to the discussions on the link-ups between training stages and reconciling the educational and cultural aspects with occupational dimensions. The proposals which the Commission will submit concerning the implementation of Articles 126 and 127 after ratification of the Treaty on European Union should go further into this point, particularly in order to define the framework of common objectives for the proposals for instruments submitted as a follow-up to the current action programmes. The discussions around the Memorandum are an opportunity to state that this concept of life-long learning should not be seen simply from the point of view of teaching or academic consistency between educational stages throughout life. The point is rather to make the "learning" process a permanent hinge for individuals in the control of their relationship to the production sector and the employment market on the one hand (the "employee" dimension) and their participative relationship with society at large (the "citizen" dimension) on the other.

e)The increasing overlapping of responsibilities and of action by a wide variety of players is likely to be one of the fundamental characteristics of vocational training in the years ahead. If Community action is to have an impact on the fundamental and dynamic aspects of vocational training systems it must take greater account of this increasing diversity and overlapping. There are two factors which are crucial when defining objectives for future actions and when taking operational options:

=>Due account must be taken of the interaction needed between several "geographical" levels of reflection, regulation and action: the Community level, the national level, the regional level and even the local level.

=>Support for the development of the roles of the social players and their greater involvement in guiding systems and monitoring action.

f)Certain more operational aspects to do with the practicalities of Community action, mentioned but in not any detail by the Memorandum, were only touched on by the reactions. In the phase of discussion of guidelines now starting, these questions should be gone into in greater depth in order to assess the real added value brought by the networking at the European level, the creation and running of transnational partnerships or the development of instruments and methods of open and distance learning on a transnational level. The current phase of the action programmes has made it possible to gauge the potential of this type of approach with a view to ongoing cooperation and a transfer of know-how throughout the Community based on the multiplier effect. The future phase should seek to enhance the quality of vocational training in the Community through expansion and systematisation.

g)One of the main points to emerge from the positions noted is the request for more resolute coordination of the different actions and initiatives pursued by the Community on vocational training. There is frequent criticism of the fragmentation which the national policy decision-makers claim is detrimental to the impact and the recognition of Community action. The objectives of coordination, link-up and transparency set in order to support the guidelines thus provide an adequate response for increasing the effectiveness of Community action. This need for coordination also exists at the national level i.e. in the way in which the Member States avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by Community action and support. Substantial progress could be achieved in these two areas.

- **Synopsis of the contributions**

Foreword

The Commission of the European Communities published in 1991 a memorandum on "vocational training in the European Community in the 1990s".

Since then, the European landscape has experienced profound change. At the beginning of 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was signed, opening up new political vistas to the European Community. At the beginning of 1993, the Single European Market dawned in a difficult social, economic and financial climate.

It was therefore important, in light of the Maastricht Treaty which grants new responsibilities to the European Community, and at a time when the Single European Market is entering into force, to ascertain positions and reactions to the analysis points contained in the memorandum on vocational training.

For this purpose, the Commission of the European Communities has sought to generate wide-ranging debate within the Member States, inviting them to give their reactions, in accordance with changing strategies and their respective contexts. The Commission thus proposed to the States that they each draw up a national contribution reacting to the memorandum on vocational training. It consequently provided the impetus behind the holding in Autumn 1992 of seminars enjoying a very wide range of contributors in each country.

In the same way, the Commission encouraged European management and labour (in the shape of UNICE and the European Trade Union Confederation) to give their reactions to the memorandum and also encouraged UNICE and the ETUC to hold discussion seminars.

Finally, the Commission sought to collect the comments and proposals generated by the memorandum within the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.

Together these debates and contributions have built up a rich, abundant and highly varied mass of information. This result was all the more laudable given the very short time frame set.

We asked TEMPO Communication to produce a first synopsis on the basis of this information and to identify the main tendencies reflected in it. This first synopsis will require amendment and completion. This is the aim, notably, of the various test meetings organised in Spring 1993 by the Commission with the group of National Correspondents, representatives of UNICE and of the ETUC, economic operators and scientists. In this way, more political proposals will gradually emerge which can be used as a basis for the production of a Commission Communication to the Council on vocational training policy in the Community.

The Task Force

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1. Introduction to the Methodology

1.1. The Starting Point

All of the contributions received made it possible to form a vast body of information material. But, due to the very open framework in which the debate had been conducted in a manner specific to each State, the contributions took highly varied forms. There was variety of content, with some contributions tackling a wide spectrum of themes and others, on the contrary, focusing on more specific points. There was variety as regards the degree of precision, with some contributions referring very directly to different points in the memorandum, whereas others only referred implicitly to the Commission's positions. There was variety on the point of whether or not there had been prior consultation of social partners. Lastly, there was variety in the official nature of the contribution.

How, then, can the significant trends be identified? An extremely cautious methodological approach was, without doubt, essential in order not to read too much in to what was said.

1.2. The Method Followed

In order to make documents comparable, the first step was to draw up a "methodological grid" (see annexe B) taking up the main themes covered in the form of seven major questions: reactions in relation to context; the role of vocational training in relation to education and in relation to the cultural factor; new strategic priorities; vocational training "for whom", "by whom", "how"; specific questions on unemployment, women, SMEs, problems with recognition of qualifications in the framework of European mobility; and expectations with regard to the European Community.

On the basis of this question grid, a vertical synopsis of all the documents was then produced, for each country, the European Trade Union Confederation, ESC, Parliament.

This vertical synopsis complete, cross-ways analysis, theme by theme, was carried out. This brought to light the logic order of the different questions: some of the more technical questions depend, in the final analysis, on other strategic, core issues. The synopsis report has thus been organised in a way reflecting this question hierarchy.

The synopsis report identifies a number of tendencies: there are various points of convergence or divergence between the contributions; and varying degrees to which they converge or diverge.

In addition, some points, initially appearing as areas of consensus, reveal differences of appreciation when more precise explanations are furnished.

It would have been ill-advised to have sought to systematically identify minority or majority viewpoints. The contributions, as pointed out, do not all tackle the same subjects. Some contributions are alone in making a given proposal or an original comment: it was useful to indicate this, even if these positions do not constitute a "statistical" tendency.

This synopsis report must be seen as groundwork, designed to stimulate debate. This debate, on the basis of the main themes tackled here, can then be supplemented and gone into in more depth, adapting methodological approach to suit the objectives pursued.

2. Summary of the Keynote Ideas of the Report

First and foremost, the various contribution show a number of "noteworthy reactions" to the Commission's memorandum. These reactions can be divided into two types: those expressed by a large majority and which can be considered as common tendencies; and those reflecting more contrasting opinions among the contributions.

One group of countries reacted to the memorandum by underlining a contradiction with the Maastricht Treaty, considering that **subsidiarity** was defined in too dynamic a manner. A second group criticised the memorandum for taking too much of an **economist** view; the intrinsic value of education and training was underlined and the fight against social exclusion identified as one of the priorities of vocational training.

Although there is no automatic correlation, the countries which recommend a more social dimension are in general also those favouring more dynamic action by the European Community. The opposite also holds true.

The same dividing line can be seen regarding the extent or the dynamism of the role which the State must play and the degree of responsibility of companies for conducting vocational training with a view to combatting and preventing unemployment.

Other comments show majority tendencies. The memorandum is criticised for the **imprecision of the terms** used to define continuing and initial training or to distinguish education from vocational training. The European Commission is reproved for making too general statements which do not sufficiently reflect the variety of situations on the ground. Major **disparities between regions** are, in this connection, underlined in a large number of contributions.

Another reaction consisted of saying that the memorandum does not expound a sufficiently **targeted approach** to vocational training, which must improve adaptation to the **variety of needs** emanating from a variety of groups. There is a call for special support measures for **SMEs**. Broad emphasis is placed on the need to give priority to vocational training for **young people**: giving unskilled young people a fresh chance and strengthening the foundations of continuing vocational training.

The majority of contributions reserved the bulk of their comments for in-depth explanation of national priorities. It should be noted in this connection that nearly half of the States are on the point or in the course of in-depth **reform** of their vocational training system. Several points emerge from these national debates and policies.

Keynotes among these common trends are the imperative of **better adaptation of qualifications to needs and changes**, the call to industry to set up training plans looking beyond the short term, an emphasis on labour-management dialogue, a trend towards decentralisation and the key significance of raising personal motivation and of developing high efficiency career guidance services. Finally, a significant number of contributions underlined the need to guarantee **better access** to training schemes: some even speak of introducing a right to training.

At first sight, there appears to be broad consensus on several points. But closer analysis of the various contributions reveals more details and major nuances or even basic divergences. Below are some examples.

Overall raising of the qualification level, defined as an objective to be attained, does not necessarily connect up with job opportunities. In some countries, **unemployment** is also rising among "white collar workers": a shortage of qualified jobs is blamed for this. At the same time, the overall rise in the qualification level of young people is also accompanied by **school drop-out** phenomena and low basic educational levels.

There is unanimous agreement that industrial and vocational training should be **brought closer together**. Better matching is expected between qualifications and the changing needs of industry. However, relatively different views are expressed on the exact nature of this closer relationship and matching. Some contributions place the emphasis on the **autonomous logic relationships** which must exist between training and the economy, others stress that learning to be **flexible** must not just serve the immediate needs of the company but also be in an individual's own interests. The majority of the contributions mentioned the need to re-focus vocational training on the individual.

In content terms, there is a shared trend to call for **reinforcement of basic training** with greater emphasis on the **transmission of basic and social skills**. This both raises young people's ability to integrate into the labour market and improves their capacity to successfully complete later continuing training.

As regards training methods, emphasis is placed on the need for them to be **personalised** and on the challenge of improving the training of trainers themselves. **Combined work and training programmes** are identified as an excellent way both of attaining better qualifications and of guaranteeing better social integration of groups with special difficulties. However, it is further specified that there is a need to encourage companies to increase the number of such training places and that support or **tutoring** for trainees must be part of such schemes.

On the question of expectations with regard to the **European Community**, these depend on the understanding which the different States have of the concept of subsidiarity and on the areas viewed as priorities within the Member States. There are major differences on this level. There is however general agreement on the request for sustained Community action to help **disadvantaged groups**, including the unemployed.

Some contributions stress that adaptation of vocational training policies to take account of the aim of **social and economic cohesion**, one of the binding forces of which is solidarity, is an obligation incumbent on the Member States, even in the hypothesis of restrictive Community subsidiarity. Some, moreover, expect **management and labour** to play a wider European role, in accordance with the terms of the Maastricht Treaty.

On the more specific question of Community programmes, conflicting remarks are made. They are driven by a wish for greater **consistency** and better complementarity between programmes, the generation of more efficient **Community value addition** and the search for better ratchet effects on national systems. Improved information is also mentioned.

Finally, on the issue considered important by all, namely recognition of qualifications in a context of greater European mobility, a majority is in favour of **greater transparency** without however continuing down the road to formal recognition. Tangible proposals are made to the Commission, such as the drawing up on a voluntary basis of a **professional log-book** which would also reflect personal experience and the encouragement of information exchange procedures raising mutual understanding both among employers and would-be "mobile" employees.

3. Strategic Issues

What are the "noteworthy tendencies" among the reactions to the memorandum? What changes have taken place in the background context? What strategic objectives must be pursued in light of these new contexts or fresh analysis of them?

3.1. "Noteworthy Reactions" and New Contexts

•The analysis sketched out in the memorandum has given rise to two types of "noteworthy reactions" going off at very different tangents.

• A first group of countries considers that the memorandum applies the principle of subsidiarity too widely. It is the duty of the European Community, they emphasise, to strictly respect subsidiarity, which stipulates that the States are responsible for the organization and content of vocational training. The diversity of national systems is presented as an advantage. This is a warning against any centralist drift by the Commission.

• A second group of countries admonishes the memorandum for taking too much the view of an "economist". They stress that training has intrinsic value and emphasise the cultural dimension of Europe. They underline that the strategic priority is the fight against unemployment. These countries stress that solidarity is at the roots of the social cohesion principle.

• A majority of countries express approval of the assumptions on which the Commission bases its analysis. This analysis is however considered "too general" on several points. Several of the assumptions should be modulated to the differences between countries' development level, regional diversities, different target groups or to the limitations of a vocational training policy.

The general assumptions on which the Commission's memorandum on vocational training in the European Community in the 1990s were based - i.e. the challenges of greater European mobility, demographic trends and increasingly rapid technological evolution - were upheld by the majority of contributions.

However, "noteworthy" reactions to the memorandum did arise in this area due to assessment of new contexts (or more detailed analysis of these contexts) which have arisen since the memorandum was written. Two types of reaction can be identified: those resulting more from European contextual aspects and those relating to more national contextual elements but constituting European tendencies.

3.1.1. From the Standpoint of the European Context

Two types of noteworthy reaction arise, at different levels and relating to different groups of countries. On the one hand, the observation was made that the memorandum goes too far on the question of subsidiarity. On the other, it was remarked that it does not go far enough on the education/training approach.

At the political level

The memorandum was written before the signature of the Maastricht Treaty whose principles must henceforth apply. While a majority of countries have called for a more precise definition of the principle of subsidiarity as regards vocational training (see point 9), three countries (Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands) consider that the "dynamic" interpretation given in the memorandum of the principle of subsidiarity oversteps the framework established by the Maastricht Treaty. These three countries intend to strictly delimit the Community's intervention scope and prevent any centralising drift on the part of the Commission.

This position of principle is understood in different ways by these countries. The United Kingdom believes that each action at Community level must have clearly defined purpose and objectives, with clear evidence of added value.

Germany, for its part, stresses the need for competition to exist between the different national systems as a guarantee of economic competitiveness. But this same country also underlines that the Member States, by virtue of the principle of economic and social cohesion, must subordinate their vocational training policies to a number of social, economic and environmental values.

At the economic and social level

The memorandum is criticised for taking a too "economist" approach. This reproof is addressed to the Commission as the main criticism by the Francophone Belgium, Flemish Belgium and the European Trade Union Confederation, and in a different form by other countries such as France and Portugal.

We are entering a period of economic recession (Italy), while public opinion, traditionally in favour of European integration, is now showing a degree of scepticism. The rise of unemployment in Europe brings with it a risk of social tension and a threat of a democratic splitting of society (Francophone Belgium). The main challenge (France) for vocational training policies must be to remain apace with technological changes without running the risk of long-term unemployment and social exclusion. All stress Europe's cultural dimension, which cannot be truncated into an economic market. Education and training must be stressed as intrinsic values.

Against the backdrop of rising internationalisation of the economy and global competition, the quality of education/training must give Europe its competitive edge, underline notably Portugal and Ireland. The European Trade Union Confederation believes that link-up with the other major policies provided for by the Maastricht Treaty should be heightened, without Community policy in the area of vocational training becoming too focused on "economist" considerations. United Kingdom believes that an efficient labour market safeguards European competitiveness, job growth and will lead to lower unemployement.

3.1.2. From the Standpoint of National Contexts

In a majority of countries, in-depth reform of vocational training systems and policies has just taken place, is underway or is planned in the short term. The debate is thus highly topical. The proposals made in the follow-up to the memorandum on vocational training are fully concurrent with these national debates, all offering an opportunity to revise basic strategy.

For example, during the work to reform vocational training, Luxembourg partially followed the guidelines contained in the Commission's memorandum.

One point common to all these reforms is that they clarify and strengthen the role to be played by the social partners. In Portugal and Spain, a national tripartite - government-trade unions-employers - agreement has been reached on the new guidelines.

In some cases too, the resources earmarked for vocational training have been increased. In Greece for example, following the 1991 national collective agreement, the percentage of financing which must be provided by employers has more than doubled.

Various contributions seeks to complete or modulate the initial analysis given by the Commission in its memorandum. This analysis was judged to be too general on several points. At this stage in the report, we will only identify a few main tendencies.

Redefining the Objectives of Vocational Training

Limitations? Ireland underlines that, even although there is a need to raise the qualification level, this will not enable everyone to find a job, due to a lack of available positions, and despite the job creation incentives introduced by the Irish authorities. As a consequence, one of the challenges tackled by the reform of the vocational training system in this country is to raise the number of Irish qualifications authenticated by a certificate and to improve recognition of such certificates, so that young Irish emigrants find it easier to get a job in another European countries.

Francophone Belgium remarks that, in a situation where unemployment is continually growing, education and vocational training are of increasing importance. At the same time, however, they cannot eliminate the problem, which has its roots in a shortage of jobs. This is paradoxical given that there are many socially useful jobs which could be done.

Quality and Efficiency. The aim of raising the quality of vocational training enjoys broadbased consensus. This area is gone into in particular depth in the Danish contribution. It is, Denmark stresses, vitally important that the concept of quality vocational training be fostered in the framework of European cooperation. This presupposes the definition of objectives and of evaluation means.

The challenge, several countries stipulate, is not just to ensure better matching of training to the needs of the economy. In a time of constraints on public finances, the costs/efficiency ratios also have to be improved. Vocational training must adapt to ever more turbulent evolution. This costs more and more, emphasises the Economic and Social Committee. There is therefore a need to increase the productivity of vocational training investments, improve the quality and efficiency of training systems and promote exchanges and synergies at European level.

Better Allowance for Disparities

At the level of the regions. The impact of the Single Market will vary a great deal from one region to the next. Some regions will suffer as a result of the open European market, in both the short- and long-term. Vocational training strategies must make better allowance for their regional disparity. It is emphasised by some that certain regions or sub-regions are faced more with a shrinking of the job market than of an actual problem of professional qualifications.

Regions with a high rate of unemployment and a low population density are usually those where there is the greatest lack of available quality training, maintains the European Parliament, which goes on to stipulate that in such regions vocational training measures must be teamed up with job creation measures.

Between the countries. Vocational training strategies must fit in with economic strategies. However, according to Greece, the least developed countries of the European Community are facing specific situations in the framework of the Single Market. They are thus suffering from

shortages of basic qualifications. They must combine short-term strategies aiming at making the most of the traditional economy with longer term ones adapting the economy to that of the more developed nations.

Portugal, for its part, stresses the challenge inherent in the attachment of new value to traditional trades which constitute a unique pool of skills.

Between the sectors. The foreseeable impact of technologies on employment varies depending on whether or not the secondary or tertiary sector are taken into account (United Kingdom). More allowance should be made for the differences of the industrial sectors and general policies should be adapted to the situation in the different professional branches (France).

On the level of demographic forecasts. The memorandum placed great emphasis on the forecast drop in the weight of young generations in the working population overall. There could however be variances in this forecast trend from country to country. Ireland has declared a foreseeable increase in its working population in the next ten years. The UK believes that the speed of change in labour markets in Europe means attempts to produce comprehensive large scale forecasts and plans, at national or at supranational level, are of limited use and fraught with difficulties. In comparison with other European countries, its proportion of women in the workforce is particularly high.

Better Allowance for Specific Groups

Young people. The attachment of priority by the Commission in its memorandum, in light of the speed of technological change and the demographic curve, to the development of vocational training activities for workers and the working population is not contested. But a majority tendency underlines that this should not be at the detriment of initial training for young people.

Better linkages between basic and continuing training, an emphasis on raising the level of basic skills and aid for smoother integration of young people into the labour market are all elements at the heart of the reforms of vocational training systems undertaken in numerous Member States.

Some countries reveal that despite general efforts to raise qualification levels, the proportion of young people without work is continually rising.

It is remarked that these worrying phenomena are not due solely to the mismatch between qualifications and marketplace requirements. Part of the problem lies in the growing numbers dropping out of school and in the specific integration difficulties of young immigrants who, in certain vocational and technical colleges, represent a high proportion of total pupils.

In some countries where the age of compulsory schooling is higher, a large proportion of young people leave school without even having acquired the equivalent of a primary school certificate.

SMEs. In both the developed and less developed countries, SMEs are acknowledged as having a crucial role to play. This is because they represent the biggest source of job creation or innovation, or because they traditionally constitute the biggest segment of the economic fabric. Specific measures or specific support structures must be developed for vocational training for SMEs.

White collar workers. Unemployment is rising both among unqualified young people and among "white collar" workers (Italy).

3.2. Core Questions

• Analysis of the various contributions reveals a number of core, strategic questions that determine other positions and give rise to contrasting points of view.

• What is the nature of the link between the world of education and the economy? In some cases, the emphasis is placed on the need for a very close relationship. Others point to the existence of two different value systems which must remain independent one from the other. To what extent, furthermore, should vocational training aim to meet the qualification needs of industry, but also to raise the self-sufficiency of individuals?

• What role is accorded to the fight against social exclusion in the various vocational training mechanisms? While there is general agreement that the State has a key role to play in fighting unemployment, there is a degree of debate on the responsibilities which employers should assume in preventing social exclusion and reintegrating groups in difficulty.

The various contributions stress the need for better adaptation of qualifications to the needs of companies, particularly in the area of continuing training which must give a rapid response to skills demand. Consensus also exists on the fact that industry must develop its role as a place of training. In-company training periods and combined work and training programmes must be stepped up. There must be improved interaction between the training sector and the economy. The training component must be strengthened within companies themselves and, conversely, the industry component must be increased within educational and training systems. This implies developing an entrepreneurial environment, a "spirit of enterprise" in schools.

But to what extent should vocational training courses also serve the interests of individuals? How, in practice, should the education/economy interaction be organised? Once we move beyond the consensus on the general idea of closer training/industry interaction, these questions give rise to diverging viewpoints in the contributions.

Should new vocational training strategies be guided more by employment policies or more by industrial policies? On this core point, too, basic divergences can be seen. These divergences relate to the scale of priority to be attached, through the various vocational training mechanisms, to the fight against unemployment and social exclusion, and to the degree of State involvement and the scale of companies own responsibilities.

The replies given to these core questions are shaped by different concepts of the content and role of basic training, method, access to training and even expectations of the European Community.

3.2.1. The Pairs Education/Economy and Man/Industry: What Degree of Flexibility?

While there is general agreement on the need to get a firmer grasp on the evolution of needs, to finetune observation mechanisms and develop policies looking to the future (see point 4), some contributions point to the impossibility of predicting the future down to the last detail in a world in constant flux. Given the economic uncertainty, vocational training should also seek to boost worker flexibility, underline Portugal and Ireland. We must prepare people to cope with the impossibility of predicting the future, stress the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.

The United Kingdom underlines the primordial role played by industry in defining qualification needs. Industry must be free to take decisions training to meet business needs. Individuals should be encouraged to take more responsibility for their own training and development. The key is to promote the links between training and business success and training and personal progression.

On the other side of the coin, another group of countries (including France, Germany, Francophone and Flemish Belgium) emphasise that vocational training should not just boost company competitiveness; it should also raise the ability of individuals to be self-sufficient, both within and outside the work sphere. Individuals must be able to guide their training choices in a way best responding to their own needs and aspirations. The European Parliament, for its part, notes that enterprises should be encouraged to develop training which goes further than meeting their own shortfalls.

A significant number of contributions stress the role which social skills must assume alongside more directly technical knowledge, in addition to the ability to learn new skills, the acquisition of transferable knowledge and the importance of strengthening basic knowledge in the initial training process.

The worlds of education and industry should move closer together, while respecting two different reasonings which must remain separate, maintains Francophone Belgium. The corporate ethos is that of working fast and efficiently. Education has its own ethos, which attaches pedagogical value to the right to make mistakes.

If it is to reach full efficiency, vocational training must be able to build upon revised and upgraded basic education, a large number of contributions declare. This basic education must fully preserve its humanist dimension. It must aim at mobility and flexibility, but also prepare people to integrate into a pluralist and democratic social order (Germany). The adaptation of qualifications must be accompanied by a drive to ensure all-round qualification of individuals and seek to strengthen the self-sufficiency skills of individuals (France). From the stage of basic school education, the aim must be to educate for work, citizenship and leisure (Luxembourg). Vocational training should be re-sited in a broader context of education for citizenship (European Trade Union Confederation).

3.2.2. Social Exclusion and the Respective Responsibilities of the State and Employers

In the majority of contributions, emphasis is placed on the need to implement specific vocational training schemes for under-qualified young job-seekers, the unemployed and particularly the long-term unemployed, people at risk of redundancy and other groups at a disadvantage such as ethnic minorities or the handicapped.

However, basic divergences appear as regards the degree of priority to be attached to the fight against social exclusion and the respective responsibilities of the State and of employers.

The British contribution stresses that the qualification mismatch of unemployed people is a key challenge. The UK stresses that training for unemployed people, and particularly the long term unemployed, within the context of the labour market within which they are likely to return to economic activity, is a key priority for State and European Community expenditure. The assuming of such training by industry would represent too high a risk investment. The State cannot put obstacles in the path of employers' freedom of choice. The role of trade unions is not specified.

At the other end of the scale is the view defended by France and echoed by Francophone Belgium. The fight against unemployment is not seen as a separate problem but as a major concern for vocational training policies. The fight against social exclusion must mobilise all of the partners in the process, including enterprises. France underlines that the latter can play a role in preventing exclusion (training for workers at risk of redundancy), in promoting the re-integration of workers when redundancy is inevitable and in easing the integration of out-of-work young people.

This point of view is also defended by the Economic and Social Committee: States and industry have joint responsibility - stipulates the ESC - for promoting access to vocational training for all categories of individuals, and particularly for workers whose job is at risk and for the unemployed. France moreover notes the need for companies to develop training activities for workers with the lowest qualification levels too in order to avoid a situation where training mainly benefits categories of employees who are already the best trained, which could reinforce exclusion situations.

Between these two extreme positions, a variety of views exist. In the majority of countries, management and labour are called upon to play a growing role, although the specific roles of employers and trade unions are not necessarily well defined (see point 7).

4. Anticipation of Needs, Response to New Needs, Advice and Guidance

Vocational training must therefore respond to the needs of companies and individuals. This brings us face to face with the problem of how to respond to needs, observe developments, anticipate foreseeable changes, and on what scale. For individuals, the issue is one of the personal motivation to go on a vocational training course, of career guidance and of information on training opportunities.

4.1. Anticipation of Needs

- *There is an emerging tendency to underline the imperative of better anticipation of needs.*
- *Better forecasting of developments must take place at all levels: national, regional, local and company.*
- *Initiatives are awaited from the European Community to facilitate the pooling and better understanding of the data collected.*

At National Level

Response to new qualification needs supposes preliminary and detailed observation of the evolution of available jobs.

It is indispensable that statistic information on employment and vocational training be improved, Greece emphasises. Flemish Belgium pinpoints one anomaly: the public Employment Exchange (VDAB) is only informed of 45% of the jobs vacant. In Portugal, research and the systematic development of statistics on training and employment form one of the five priorities defined in the 1991 tripartite agreement on vocational training.

In Luxembourg, the vocational training reform bill was preceded by general analysis, in 1991, of new qualification needs.

In Spain, in the framework of the reform of vocational training, the National Institute for Employment (INEM) has been the instrument for the creation of a standing "observatory" on needs and professions in the labour market. The INEM is also conducting sectoral research with a view to qualitative analysis of professions and identification of the updatings required.

France, for its part, believes that government authorities should be able to encourage and provide financial support to exemplary instances of change anticipation, this through forward research contracts and multi-annual commitments to the development of training.

Several countries insist on the role to be played by scientific research or even by the education system in this analysis and information task.

The specific position of the United Kingdom on anticipation should be noted. It believes that anticipating with exactitude is a very difficult task. The UK maintains that the priority should go to developing systems which can respond in a flexible and coherent manner to the needs generated by change.

Decentralisation

The United Kingdom, which has introduced employer led structures in the form of TECs and LECs, believes that evaluation of needs should as a priority take place at local level. Employers, in local partnerships including training providers, are best placed to identify and meet their own skill needs. In the Netherlands, there has been a strong tendency towards decentralisation: there is a shift in tasks and responsibilities away from the central level to the regions. This is viewed as the most suitable level for response to the problems which exist. Again in the Netherlands, the introduction of annual training plans drawn up in each of the regions should be noted. A similar trend has recently been seen in Greece.

At the level of the company

Several countries stress the need for companies to integrate the management of human resources into an economic development plan in order to anticipate qualification needs in the medium term. This is also an approach called for by the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Parliament.

Different degrees of emphasis however exist on the degree of planning formality and its scope. The UK believes that company plans must be flexible. The European Trade Union Confederation calls for the anticipation of needs at the level of each professional sector.

The example of France

France attaches great priority to the establishment of sound diagnosis and the anticipation of needs. This country stands out through the encouragement given to related measures at all levels. At national level, the French State directly cooperates with the competent centres and research consultancies.

At regional level, "observatories" have been set up. Companies are encouraged to seek specialist advice for diagnosis and forecasting. Following the adoption of a law in 1991, incentives are granted for the negotiation of agreements on vocational training, sector by sector. In the framework of these agreements, companies enjoy access to additional resources, provided that vocational training measures are integrated into a five-year plan which embraces all foreseeable changes in technology and work organization.

What the European Community could do

Several countries (Spain, France) expect Community initiatives in this field. Exchanges of information should be stimulated between countries. Common grids making data comparable should be drawn up. The Commission, France suggests, should step up activities in the area of forecasting, anticipating new needs, particularly in sectors exposed to world competition. Spain suggests the establishment of statistical data banks at European level. This is a suggestion supported by the Economic and Social Committee.

4.2. Career Guidance and Personal Motivation

• *Vocational training must seek to raise company competitiveness and also heighten the self-sufficiency of individuals.*

• *It is thus important to stimulate individual motivation, encourage sound information and favour wide access to efficient career guidance and advice services.*

Motivation

Several countries (including the United Kingdom) believe that successful vocational training hinges upon personal motivation and attach priority to the raising of this.

Germany, for its part, stresses that individuals must be able to choose freely whether or not to take part in a training course.

The European Parliament, while agreeing that personal motivation should be raised, stresses that vocational training must be perceived as useful by the young participant: i.e. it must be recognised training and must culminate in a job.

Career guidance at school

There is a lack of career guidance in schools, underlines the European Parliament.

Flemish Belgium regrets that in Belgium, guidance is entrusted to psychological-medical-social centres little in touch with the realities of vocational and technical education.

Francophone Belgium reveals that it is conducting, in the framework of a reform plan for vocational and technical education, research into the possibility of pushing back the age at which young people must opt for a specific vocational and technical sector. At the same time, the period of basic education for all pupils would be extended (see point 5).

Career information and advice

France stresses the need to improve information on training possibilities for all workers. A development worthy of special mention in France is the recently introduced right to a personal skills assessment.

The United Kingdom similarly stresses the need to boost the role of information. A new UK feature: local information, evaluation and guidance services for members of the working population who can "purchase" customised services under a credit points system. Stimulating information and encouraging opportunities for quality advice and guidance services are, the UK believes, fields where the European Community could take initiatives which would supplement and support MS's own efforts.

5. Initial and Continuing Training: Definition, Priorities, Content?

• Echoing Germany, a significant number of countries call for clearer definition of the terms used. The definition of vocational training given by the memorandum (that after compulsory schooling) is not sufficient.

• Priority must be given to the reinforcement of initial training in order to raise young people's chances of getting a job and provide good foundations for future continuing training.

• Vocational training must be acknowledged as part of the system of basic education.

• The teaching of basic skills in initial vocational training must be reinforced.

• Social skills, methodological abilities and the ability to learn new skills are becoming key elements of new qualifications.

• In the area of training certification, individuals should be able to obtain recognition of both technical skills and professional experience.

5.1. Definition: Are We Speaking of the Same Thing?

A significant number of countries (Germany, Francophone Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Spain, Portugal) criticise the memorandum for not giving a clear and precise definition of vocational training on the one hand and of initial and continuing training on the other. A same term can mean different things in different countries; we must be clear about what we mean.

For the Germans, this criticism is of basic importance. The definition of vocational training given in the memorandum (that following compulsory schooling) does not at all correspond to the German system, where vocational training is integrated before the end of compulsory schooling (this is also the case in Francophone Belgium, where schooling is compulsory until the age of 18).

Germany feels that it would be more pertinent to make a distinction between initial vocational training and continuing vocational training (that following the period of compulsory schooling). The definition given in the memorandum, Germany continues, does not correspond to Articles 126 and 127 of the Maastricht Treaty (under the terms of the memorandum, higher education would come under Article 127!).

Furthermore, the Germans stress their disagreement with the part of the memorandum referring to the blurring of the frontiers between education and training. This statement is judged to be too general. On the contrary, Germany suggests, the terms (initial training and continuing training) should be more precisely defined and subsequently the points at which there are synergies and complementarities between these two separate concepts identified.

France, for its part, believes that the distinction between initial training and continuing training is not always pertinent: in particular for a young apprentice, a young job-seeker on an in-company training course, or for a student who continues studies while holding a job.

Luxembourg proposes that there be better definition of two pairs of concepts: initial and continuing vocational training on the one hand and general and vocational training on the other.

5.2. Initial Training and Continuing Training

A large number of the contributions point to the need to devote special attention to improving initial vocational training with the aim of meeting two objectives: improving young people's chances of finding a job when they leave school, and laying firm foundations for the development of continuing vocational training throughout their career.

Finally, as regards continuing training, special attention is focused on the unemployed and workers at threat of losing their jobs, and on underqualified young people who should be given a second chance.

The recently undertaken or planned reforms of national vocational training systems tend to illustrate these various priorities.

5.2.1. Reinforcing Initial Training

There are several dimensions to this reinforcement.

Integrating the vocational component

Several countries have recently followed the German example and taken steps to ensure that vocational training is acknowledged as a valuable and integral part of the basic educational system.

One such example is Italy which intends to integrate vocational training into the compulsory schooling curriculum (from aged 14) and raise the school leaving age from 14 to 16, as part of a reform of its vocational training system.

Reinforcing basic skills

The reinforcement of basic skills, seen as a good investment for the future, in initial vocational education is a strategic priority in Flemish and Francophone Belgium. Social skills (the key element of new qualifications), stresses Flemish Belgium, should even be instilled in the very early stages of the schooling process. A similar objective is pursued in the Netherlands, where the same basic education is now given to all young people aged under 16.

Postponing the choices

Francophone Belgium is proposing to postpone to after 14 the choice of opting for vocational (technical) training or for more general education. Reforms in Italy and in the Netherlands go in the same direction.

5.2.2. Better Linkages between Initial and Continuing Training

These linkages are rendered all the more vital, stresses Francophone Belgium, due to the trend towards a longer transition period between school and the first job. "Making good use" of this period is viewed as a vocational training priority in Italy.

There should be better complementarity, proposes Portugal, between the general educational system and the different technical education systems. The education system must lay sound cultural, technical and scientific foundations.

5.2.3. Priorities of Continuing Training

Continuing training, Germany feels, should focus as a priority on the retraining of workers who are unemployed or face a treat of unemployment, and on the requalification of young job-seekers.

A contrasting range of situations exists in the different countries. Whereas some more developed countries, as seen, are in the process of more firmly defining objectives and finetuning vocational training tools, others are still at the phase of laying the foundations.

Greece, for example, which is faced with a general shortage of basic qualifications, is in the process of developing a high quality, post-secondary vocational training system which would be capable of rapidly adapting to change.

In Portugal - where once again priority is given to the integration of young people - a recent project seeks to establish a good continuing training system through offering all young people access to a minimum one-year training course culminating in a qualification before their entry to the labour market.

5.3. Content

Initial training and continuing training are of a different nature and play different roles.

A large number of the contributions underline that basic training must instill flexibility and give broad foundations on which knowledge can be built throughout one's career. They must give technical adaptability/flexability and must teach people how to react to ensure their professional mobility. This explains the importance acquired, as regards the flexibility objective, by new key qualifications: the ability to learn new skills and adapt to new circumstances.

Continuing training must, for its part, give people a more rapid "reaction capability".

Finally, Germany sums up (on the basis of the point contained in Article 36 of the memorandum), both initial and continuing training must seek to instill methodological and social skills and the ability to learn on a continuous basis. Greece specifies that the acquisition of skills cutting across specialities should be encouraged.

A number of contributions make more specific remarks on this subject, which is an area of broad consensus.

Germany, Luxembourg and Denmark stress the need to promote foreign languages in vocational training instruments. This is a point of view shared by the European Parliament. The Economic and Social Committee goes further, suggesting that basic European knowledge (without infringing upon cultural differences) could be taught in the different countries: a command of two Community languages in addition to the mother tongue, and a command of a common computer language.

Luxembourg proposes developing qualifications in growth sectors such as tourism and the environment.

France, finally, stresses the need to acquire multiple and cross-subject qualifications and indicates that it is studying the creation of a quality charter.

5.4. Certification

There is consensus on the idea that individuals should be able to obtain recognition of both technical skills and professional experience. Certification provisions must be defined at national level and in a coordinated manner.

Apart from this point, very different national contexts exist. The less developed countries face specific challenges. Ireland is thus giving priority to a reform of the apprenticeship system in order to make it more flexible, raise the quality and above all make it obligatory for the successful completion of an apprenticeship to be authenticated by a national certificate.

In Greece, work is underway in the area of certification of the various diplomas issued by private and public institutions. Recognition internally and abroad of these certificates are priorities for these countries.

Ireland mentions the phenomenon of the emigration of young people who have obtained qualifications in Ireland but are obliged to move to another country due to a lack of available jobs at home.

Luxembourg is in the opposite situation of not finding sufficient qualified labour on site and must rely more on immigration and frontier workers. It therefore has an increased need for comparability of the various qualifications.

This raises the whole question of recognition and transparency of qualifications at European level, in the framework of increased mobility in the Single Market context. It is an issue on which more contrasting views exist (see point 9.2.).

The United Kingdom has introduced a national framework of National Vocational Qualifications, based on competence standards identified by industry.

6. How?

6.1. Training Methods

•Teaching methods must be revised and more focused on the individual. In addition, there is a need for better integration of new techniques, particularly multi-media.

•Open and distance learning is considered a good vocational training method. Emphasis is placed on the need for good information, broad access and appropriate quality control means.

•Trainers have to play new roles as advisers and groups leaders.

•Raising the quality of training for trainers is a key aim.

•Combined work and training schemes and in-company training courses should be promoted for both pedagogical reasons and for purposes of social integration. This needs to be accompanied by a development of a trainee tutoring system and the guarantee of a sufficient number of training places.

•Good evaluation techniques, and particularly self-evaluation mechanisms, should be encouraged.

•Finally, the entire training apparatus must be modernised in order to heighten its efficiency, while taking care that access is guaranteed to all.

In order to achieve the aim of flexibility and to instill these social skills which form the foundations of the new qualifications and this ability to learn, methods must be re-thought. A number of common tendencies emerge from the contributions in this area.

Re-focusing methods on the individual

The entire pedagogical system must be revised and re-focused on the individual and individual initiative; more flexibility is needed (Germany, France, United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Portugal).

The pacing and approach taken by training should be modulated, stresses Portugal, and creativity encouraged.

Methods must adapt to the variety of needs, underlines France. France believes that the personalisation and individualisation of methods should rise to two challenges: firstly the need to respond to the different levels of availability and acquired skills of employees; and secondly the need to respond to the social difficulties encountered by a growing proportion of the population.

Integrating new techniques

This challenge is given special emphasis by Ireland, Portugal and the Netherlands.

Generally speaking, modern technologies must be introduced into vocational training methods.

In particular, multi-media techniques must be integrated.

Improving infrastructure

Greece underlines that, as far as it is concerned, improving the quality of basic infrastructure is a priority.

6.2. Open and Distance Learning

The Member States are worried that European training systems are insufficiently adapted to society's changing needs. This worry relates to the updating of the skills and qualifications of trainers and also to the more efficient development of training tools and knowledge transmission mechanisms using technologies and new learning and teaching approaches.

The traditional face-to-face relationship between the teacher and the student has undeniable intrinsic value but is not capable of fully integrating the revolutionary progress inherent in continuing training. The majority of SMEs cannot do without their staff for long periods. It has to be said that the efficiency and productivity of the educational system has not matched the growth in productivity and complexity of the rest of society, particularly within companies. Current technological developments appear to be widening the gap even further.

Some qualification shortfalls are so serious and require such a substantial investment (even if they only affect a relatively limited group) that measures must be taken in a European framework, naturally while respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

Major effort to structure open and distance learning is thus required at Community level. Conventional distance learning systems should be able to re-orientate their activity towards more industrial environments. Furthermore, the new technologies themselves should be used to produce and supply teaching material enabling individual learning and heightened efficiency of the learning process.

As regards the role of distance learning in vocational training and in particular in facilitating access to the latter, mention must be made of the reaction of several Member States (Flemish Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Netherlands, United Kingdom) to the document drawn up under the British presidency on the priorities and criteria for action in the area of distance learning. In this framework, attention can be drawn to points made in the responses of these Member States and notably:

-Distance learning can be particularly useful in regions where there are major gaps in the level of technical skills of the workforce.

-Distance learning should not be restricted to post-secondary education and training.

-A range of measures are being implemented or are planned at governmental level in several Member States on this theme, including notably:

. The continuation of experiments using clearly separated modules, incorporating flexibility and adaptable to specific uses.

. The promotion of distance learning in vocational training and education institutes.

. The establishment of information networks including, among others, industrial organizations.

. The investment and expansion of distance learning resources in Education and Learning Centres and in foundations promoting the use of this training method.

6.3. New Roles for Trainers

Advisers

More and more, trainers must play the role of advisers, helping the person trained to make a choice between the different sectors and to plan which direction to take (Germany, Luxembourg).

Group leaders

Trainers find themselves in the position of becoming group leaders who then carry out a teaching task in an autonomous manner (Germany). Trainers themselves will become obliged to work in teams (Ireland).

Modular organization

Steps should be taken to encourage a modular organization of training, where within the modules the trainer draws on his own personal experience (Portugal, Ireland).

6.4. Training of trainers

The development of more personalised methods and of new roles for trainers implies an adaptation of the training dispensed to training staff and a raising of the quality of this: a wish expressed by the majority of contributions.

First challenge: trainers must be prepared to integrate new skills. Their ability to further communication and self-learning processes must be developed (Germany). Trainers must also be familiar with communication techniques and with problem-solving and management (Flemish Belgium).

Second challenge: the quality of the training dispensed to trainers must be improved. In Francophone Belgium, inadequate training of trainers is mentioned as one of the reasons of dropping pupil numbers in the technical education colleges.

Third challenge: the technical, pedagogical and personal skills of trainers must be constantly updated. Francophone Belgium suggests granting a one-year sabbatical to teaching trainers for the purposes of refresher training. Ireland, a country where the training of trainers is a priority, suggests various methods: participation in trade fairs, in internal or external courses, secondment of trainers to industry.

6.5.The Merits of Combined Work and Training Schemes and In-Company Training

While there is some debate (see point 3.2.1.) on the general level regarding the dialectic link between the needs of the company and those of the individual and on the end objectives of vocational training, there is consensus on the fact that companies are a crucial centre of training.

There is a need, remark the majority of contributions, to multiply and institutionalise the contacts between schools and companies.

Developing Combined Work and Training

The principle of combined work and training, which inspires the German dual system, enjoys wide support in the different countries.

Combined schemes must be developed in all vocational training programmes, underlines Portugal. They must move beyond the apprentice framework to all training levels, adds Luxembourg, while at the same time developing new types of combined schemes.

Social merit

In addition to its pedagogical merits, more widespread recourse to combined training schemes has social advantages. The apprenticeship/work option is all the more important in that it extends access to vocational training and provides assistance to people who have specific difficulties in learning, underlines Germany. Combined training, stresses Francophone Belgium, plays a particularly beneficial integrating role in the vocational or technical education sectors where there is a high proportion of young immigrants.

Parallel tutoring system

France warns that a job is not in itself a training experience. If in-company training is to be successful, a tutoring system must be established, implying knowledge transmission by qualified employees and the company's management.

Francophone and Flemish Belgium both also stress the need for good support and supervision of young people on in-company training schemes by training advisors.

Increasing the number of places available

Employers must be encouraged to create a larger number of training places. The problem is that in the current economic crisis, the trend tends to be in the opposite direction (Francophone and Flemish Belgium). The emphasis is also placed on the need to guarantee democratic access to training courses and prevent any discrimination.

6.6. Evaluation

If the quality of vocational training is to be raised, good evaluation techniques must be promoted.

Self-evaluation and self quality control must be established, underlines Germany. This is a proposal taken up by Luxembourg, which adds that evaluation methods must change in line with the evolution of qualifications. Evaluation methods must be more qualitative and more focused on the trainee.

Ireland points out that as part of the reform of the apprenticeship system, priority has been given to improving the evaluation mechanisms of vocational training.

In Italy, the Labour Ministry produced in 1992 an operational guide for the evaluation of vocational training courses.

Two groups of countries can be identified in this connection. Those which, by tradition, attach special importance to the labour-management dialogue as regards defining policies and organizing vocational training, and intend to complete or reinforce this role. This first group comprises France, Germany, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Another group of States, which joined the European Community more recently (Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland), are taking advantage of the reform of their vocational training systems to set out more precisely the role to be played by management and labour. In Spain and Portugal, the main thrusts of the vocational training reforms are the result of tripartite national agreements.

For Germany, the two sides of industry play the principal role. In Denmark, management and labour play a decisive role both at the level of policy drafting and at that of planning and management. In the Netherlands, attention is drawn to the more important role now played by management and labour in the quality control of vocational training and the definition of key qualifications.

In France, where management and labour have historically played an active role in elaborating legal standards, the lay-out of systems and even their management, a new impetus has just been given through the branch-by-branch negotiations. A national joint committee has also been created to follow up these agreements. The two sides of industry should also soon be more directly involved in analysing the impact of Community measures at French national level.

The tripartite agreement on vocational training signed in 1991 in Portugal stipulates that the two sides of industry are to contribute towards the definition and implementation of vocational training policies. To a large extent, the exact way in which the responsibilities stemming from this agreement are to be shared out still has to be defined.

In Ireland, management and labour were closely involved in the recent reform of the apprenticeship system, especially with regard to defining new curricula.

In Greece, the last few years have also been marked by a strengthening of the role of the two sides of industry. For instance, they are now directly involved at different levels:

-The National Council for Vocational Training and Employment, created to define the broad lines of the planned reform of vocational training, includes representatives of management and labour.

-Management and labour are involved through the Organisation for Vocational Training and Education, a body responsible among other things for certification, planning of formal vocational training and for vocational training at post-secondary level.

-They are also directly represented on the committees set up at regional and prefectural level, responsible for monitoring local employment markets, providing advice and promoting dialogue between the two sides of industry.

Spain has recently (December 1992) concluded a tripartite agreement concerning vocational training, and has also lately completed the reform of its vocational training system.

In this reform, vocational training in Spain has been structured around two separate branches. On the one hand, there is "educational vocational training", under the control of the Ministry of Education and the Autonomous Communities. Within this framework, the two sides of industry

have been directly associated in defining the second and third vocational training modules (over 16 years of age).

On the other hand, there is "occupational vocational training", intended for workers, job-seekers and the unemployed, under the joint control of the Ministries of Education and Labour. Here, management and labour are represented on the Provincial Committees, which bring together all the socio-economic operators. They also take part in the preparation of three-year agreements (between employers and trade unions) defining specific action within the National Plan for vocational training and entry into working life: in this context, they are responsible for monitoring and quality control.

7.2. Decentralization

The United Kingdom underlines the importance of the local level, which is the most conducive to education-company partnerships, drawing attention to the recent creation of a network of local structures managed by employers: the TECs or Training and Enterprise Councils (LECs in Scotland). The Netherlands too emphasizes the value of the local level as a breeding ground for partnerships: a trend strengthened in the Netherlands by the growing independence of schools.

The role of the regions was recently enhanced in France following the introduction of decentralization laws. Vocational training is the subject of contracts between the State and the regions, which France presents as a possible example of the form which interlinking could take in other countries. The regions, which are thus given common law competence in the field of vocational training, are now in charge of "observatories" too.

7.3. Vitalizing Roles of the State

The growing importance of the role played by the two sides of industry and the accelerating tendency towards decentralization in the decision-making process do not, however, necessarily take responsibilities away from the State. These responsibilities are redefined in the shape of a vitalizing role.

For Germany, the State's role is to define the framework conditions, which include recognition of qualifications and the performance of compensatory functions: giving special support to persons in difficulty and the unemployed in their attempts to return to working life and assisting less-favoured regions or companies at a disadvantage because they are small in size.

Portugal stresses that the State has special responsibilities with regard to initial training, research, design and evaluation and in the field of the training of trainers.

In France, the State established the framework laws following agreements between the two sides of industry. New legislation dating from 1991 has had two major positive effects:

-extending the financing obligation for companies with fewer than 10 workers;

-within the framework of the branch agreements, making additional means available subject to compliance with certain conditions: multiannual programming, improved quality and broader access.

8. Access to Vocational Training

•Access to vocational training must be enlarged. Some contributions ask for all population categories to be able to benefit from the actions taken. Others demand the right to initial and continuing training.

•Young people constitute a priority target group. The objective is to improve basic training, to ensure a smoother transition to the labour market or to give a second chance to unqualified young people.

•Priority must be given to unemployed persons with insufficient qualifications and to workers threatened with redundancy.

• It is necessary to promote flexible vocational training methods adapted to the specific needs of SMEs. Special support structures must be developed.

•Assistance must be provided to women returners. Efforts must also be made "upstream" to guarantee genuine equal opportunities from initial training onwards.

8.1. Broader Access and the Right to Vocational Training

Broader access to vocational training is a priority defined by the European Trade Union Confederation, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and a majority of the countries. Some of these countries explicitly regret the little amount of attention given to this question in the Commission memorandum.

France highlights broader access as a strategic priority. Several measures have moreover recently been introduced along these lines, including the extension of individual training leave for employees on term contracts and recognition of a right to a skills assessment for all workers. In addition, France draws attention to the need for all categories of workers to benefit from vocational training measures. It must be ensured, France underlines, that the disparities in qualifications do not grow even wider within companies, which could generate further exclusion.

For the Economic and Social Committee, it is essential for a right to initial and continuing training to be acknowledged, and for it to be implemented in practice, because although formally recognized its real application leaves a lot to be desired!

For Luxembourg, access to vocational training is one of the key points of the specific opinion that the ESC is in the process of drafting. Francophone Belgium adds that the right to training is meaningless unless matched with a right to employment.

Denmark, for its part, places the emphasis on equality of opportunity for all students as regards access to vocational training.

8.2. A Targeted Approach

A more targeted approach is called for by several countries. Italy sums up these expectations: vocational training should meet a variety of needs emanating from a variety of target groups.

Several specific groups should benefit from special support measures to ensure equal opportunities. Among those most frequently mentioned are: young people, the unemployed, workers, SMEs and women returners.
But attention is also drawn to other priorities by different countries as regards access to vocational training.

Less-favoured regions. Workers from these regions must be given special assistance. Concern is expressed by Germany in particular.

Workers affected by restructuring. Specific measures must be taken to help them, insists the Economic and Social Committee.

Immigrants. Italy underlines the growth of immigration from Central and Eastern Europe and the developing countries. It is essential, it maintains, that vocational training be regarded as an integration factor for immigrant workers from outside the European Community. Greece and Spain highlight the particular case of the integration of workers returning to their countries. The Netherlands stresses the problem of ethnic minorities.

The handicapped. Mention is made of this group in a good many contributions.

Management. Management staff must be given special attention. Italy raises the question of middle management and mentions the rising level of unemployment among white-collar workers. Portugal points out that management staff have the ability to become trainers themselves.

8.3. Young People

A significant number of countries give priority to the development of vocational training for young people, with some of them even focusing their contribution on this specific subject.

The first issue is the strengthening of initial training so as to ensure that young people leaving school have the best possible chance of finding a job thanks to adequate and recognized skills. The first concern is to improve basic skills during initial training (see point 5). Several countries, as we have already said, also intend to reinforce the vocational component of the first cycle of compulsory schooling. Strengthening this component is also regarded as a factor boosting equal opportunity and improving integration of young people with particular social or learning difficulties.

The second issue lies in giving a second chance to young people excluded from the educational system, who drop out or leave school with no qualifications or with insufficient qualifications to integrate into the labour market.

Finally, several countries (Portugal, Francophone Belgium, Italy, Greece) emphasize the transitional period between leaving school and actually finding a job. Following the tripartite agreement on vocational training, Portugal offers these young people at least one year of training leading to qualifications. For Italy, vocational training must be regarded as a transitional factor in preparing for working life, even if there is no immediate possibility of obtaining a job.

The main problem in Greece is the great number of students who do not succeed to the entrance examinations for the Institutes of the Tertiary Education. Most of them have got a general education background so they are lacking qualifications to attain a job. The state in

order to undergo some serious social problems established in 1992 the Institutes for Vocational Training.

8.4. The Unemployed

Apart from young job-seekers, two other categories are also mentioned: unemployed persons with insufficient qualifications and workers threatened with redundancy. Among the unemployed, particular reference is made to the long-term unemployed.

The specific situation of the unemployed is mentioned many times, and various special support measures for them are proposed. In most of the contributions, vocational training is described as a key way of integrating the unemployed into the labour market. This dimension of combating unemployment is even described as an essential priority by different countries such as Germany, France and Belgium. But attention must be drawn to the limited number of tangible proposals made in the different contributions.

Francophone Belgium mentions the counselling plan for the unemployed introduced at the beginning of 1993, comprising personal interviews followed by training proposals.

The United Kingdom raises the problem of training costs for the unemployed and reports the development of credits which they can use to buy guidance and training of their choice . The United Kingdom also supports the idea that it is preferable to promote retraining schemes than to hand out benefits to the unemployed.

France emphasizes the role of vocational training not only in helping the unemployed to reintegrate into the labour market but also as a way of preventing unemployment and exclusion: further training for workers threatened with redundancy, or retraining to help them find different employment.

The tripartite agreement signed in 1991 in Portugal sets out as one of its objectives the development of one-year training programmes by the government for the long-term unemployed.

The Economic and Social Committee suggests that new avenues should be explored between exclusion and a welfare existence, through flexible and negotiated re-employment programmes or even through socially useful activities requiring occupational skills that are easy to acquire.

For its part, the European Parliament reproaches the authorities for developing training or retraining programmes for the long-term unemployed that often merely "paper over the cracks".

8.5. SMEs

SMEs constitute 90% of European companies and are particularly effective in job creation. Yet they have little inclination to invest in vocational training activities.

8.5.1. The Problems Encountered

These are of a pedagogical and economic nature.

-SMEs do not have their own training structures and so they must use expensive external structures which are ill-suited to their own particular needs (European Parliament).

-Faced with rapid technological development, SMEs do not always have the material and staff resources to run such training courses (Luxembourg).

-SMEs are not always aware of their staff's continuing training needs and tend to take a short-term approach to this problem (Luxembourg).

-For an SME seeking new qualifications, the use of external manpower poses problems of work disorganization, which is why it is important to have retraining activities for SME employees (France).

-SMEs do not normally use public employment services handling job vacancies and applications (Flemish Belgium).

8.5.2. The Solutions Proposed

The United Kingdom underlines that it is essential to promote flexible training methods allowing workers or groups of workers in SMEs to train at times and paces that suit them best. France takes up the same idea of adaptation of training times to cater for the availabilities of SMEs and their employees.

Germany recommends self-instruction schemes taking the needs of SMEs into account and calls for special support from the State for the training of workers in SMEs.

France emphasizes the interest of establishing partnerships between SMEs and large companies.

Portugal suggests making technical assistance available to SMEs through specialized services incorporated in networks. The aim would be to help SMEs identify and prioritize training needs, to develop training plans, to introduce training programmes and to make these programmes part of the reorganization of the company. The Economic and Social Committee proposes the creation of training services adapted to the requirements of SMEs which can serve a number of production units per sector or per geographical area.

In the field of support structures, Luxembourg quotes two positive examples:

-the Danish example of "job rotation", allowing small companies to release staff for training schemes;

-the German example of "small inter-firm training centres" offering a common training

programme.
Luxembourg puts forward a few more precise proposals:

-improved access to information (for SMEs) on training possibilities or assistance in disseminating good practices;

-financial incentives for SMEs;

-development of coercive measures: for instance, by making a certain degree of investment in training compulsory in accordance with turnover.

8.6. Women

Several of the contributions specifically refer to improving the access of women to vocational training. They regard this as a necessity for two reasons: that of equity, in the form of equal opportunities, and that of demography, linked with the priority to be given to retraining for older persons in view of the trend in birth rates.

Women are faced with several problems. Firstly, they find it difficult to go back to work after interrupting their career for family reasons or to bring up young children. Re-integration in the job market is often difficult. This is because the jobs at the bottom end of the scale have simply been axed during their career break and because in general a lower qualificational level is seen among women.

How can these sticking points be remedied? Flemish Belgium suggests that a number of facilities enjoyed by women in the public sector should be extended to the private sector, in terms of keeping jobs open or offering part-time alternatives.

And then, adds Francophone Belgium, remedies must be found for the different forms of discrimination by attacking them at source. It is a problem that lies at the very roots of education, with girls tending to be guided towards careers with lower qualifications. These directional pressures in school life, between the ages of 14 and 16, should be carefully studied.

More generally, it is a question of equal access to vocational training, for there certainly is discrimination, observes the European Parliament.

So what is to be done? Germany calls upon the State to take measures promoting the training of women. Luxembourg reports efforts to "put women in men's trades". In France, the agreements reached in the different branches of industry within the context of relaunching the management-labour dialogue ensure more emphasis on targeted training. The French State makes its support subject to one condition: equality for men and women must be effectively respected in the different training activities carried out at sectoral level.

9.What is Expected from the European Community?

9.1. How is Subsidiarity to be Applied?

•One group of countries challenges the dynamic concept of subsidiarity contained in the memorandum. Intervention by the Community should rather be limited to exchanges of information and experiences.

•A second group, on the other hand, expects the European Community to play a major role as regards impetus and innovation. It is in favour of the definition of common objectives, which in no way means harmonization of policies from above.

•Several contributions ask for the role of management and labour at European level to be strengthened, in accordance with the social subsidiarity provided for in the Maastricht Treaty.

Can the convergence of objectives be reconciled with respect for diversities and, if so, how? What is the value added by the Community? Going beyond subsidiarity as regards relationships between the European Community and the Member States, what of social subsidiarity?

The Member States are divided on this question, which brings highly contrasting reactions. Three different groups of countries can be identified in this respect.

The first group argues in favour of a restrictive interpretation of subsidiarity and strongly disagrees with the memorandum on this point (Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom).

A second group of countries is in favour of a broad interpretation of subsidiarity (France, Luxembourg, Portugal). They are joined in this by the European Trade Union Confederation and the Economic and Social Committee, with some nuances as to the extent of Community intervention and in the arguments used in support of their theses.

A third group of countries (Greece, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Belgium) have little or nothing to say on this subject. It can be presumed that these countries would tend to be in favour of a non-restrictive interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity. For Ireland, it is quite clear: it cannot find fault in a single passage in the memorandum.

Denmark adopts an original stance on this point. On the one hand it criticises the memorandum for not making a clear distinction between the respective responsibilities of the Commission and of the Member States. Denmark suggests a diagram showing how competence is shared out. It warns against the dangers of harmonising national systems, the differences of which should be respected. In the opinion of this country, the Commission's role should be limited to that of a "catalyst". On the other, while calling for strict application of the principle of subsidiarity, Denmark believes that the principle should not be applied in a rigid manner: its dynamic nature and the necessary adaptations to it must be respected.

9.1.1. Subsidiarity: Restrictive Interpretation

The "dynamic concept of subsidiarity" contained in the Commission's memorandum contradicts Article 127 of the Treaty of Maastricht, which places the responsibility on the different Member States when it comes to the content and organization of vocational training. There should not be any centralist intervention on the part of the Commission in this respect. The principle of subsidiarity must be strictly applied, which means that the European Community can only support and complete national actions.

But this being the case, what scope is there for action by the European Community? The Netherlands does not say. Denmark has drawn up a list of examples of themes which are obvious areas for Commission initiatives: information; the promotion of contacts and the creation of networks; the encouragement of precise activities and objectives, for example in the fields of new technologies or foreign languages.

Germany and the United Kingdom agree that Community intervention must be focused on exchanges of experiences and information.

For the United Kingdom, every Community intervention must be justified beforehand in terms of the added value that it can contribute. Interventions must be set within limited objectives preserving the freedom of action of the State and employers alike. Support for the unemployed or the promotion of advice and guidance are indicated as possible areas of intervention.

Germany considers that, within the context of the Single Market, the existence of competition among different training systems in the Member States is a positive factor for economic performance and is in keeping with social and economic cohesion. The scope for Community intervention must be limited to "reasonable cooperation". Germany also refers to a number of social, economic and environmental values to be respected by all the Member States.

9.1.2. Subsidiarity: Non-Restrictive Interpretation

For this second group of countries, it is necessary to go beyond the stage of simple exchanges of information and experiences. The complementarity provided for in the Maastricht Treaty means that the European Community has a major role to play in developing and promoting new ideas and practices.

France is in favour of establishing common objectives, on a voluntary basis, to define a Community frame of reference within which the States and the different operators can act. This has nothing to do with harmonization of policies from above, which must be rejected. For Luxembourg, a distinction must be made between Community powers, national powers and joint responsibilities, whilst the Economic and Social Committee points out that subsidiarity implies the existence of objectives which must be set jointly by the European Community and the Member States, adding that it is essential to define the respective interventions at Community and national level.

Various arguments are put forward in support of this broader and more dynamic interpretation of subsidiarity. These are certainly worth mentioning.

Political argument

For Luxembourg, it must be acknowledged that whilst the principle of subsidiarity is aimed at preventing any abusive intervention by the European Community, this may however be open to

various interpretations. There is a grey area which cannot be cleared up solely by legal arguments: there are political arguments which must also be taken into account.

Argument of effectiveness

For Portugal, subsidiarity must be viewed in the light of practical effectiveness. To what extent is national action made more effective by Community intervention? Portugal offers the example of the environment which, from the point of view of effectiveness, is a suitable field for Community intervention. From this same standpoint of effectiveness, vocational training falls more within the competence of the Member State. But the fact that States have the greatest powers does not free them from all constraints: they must respect the principle of social and economic cohesion, at the centre of which must be placed solidarity.

Economic argument

This is a question of European competitiveness, observes the Economic and Social Committee. European policy in the field of vocational training cannot be reduced to the sum total of national policies. There must be powerful synergies among countries as regards forecasting, projects, resources and tangible achievements.

Social argument

According to the European Trade Union Confederation, the European Community must "uplift" national policies. It must promote and organize a common platform of rights. Sometimes too, it must take binding measures. For instance, the ETUC regrets the fact that the European Community has not yet taken such decisions as regards access to vocational training.

9.1.3. Social Subsidiarity

The Maastricht Treaty and the social agreement call for the establishment of social subsidiarity, which must be applied to training in particular. This viewpoint of the European Trade Union Confederation is shared by the Economic and Social Committee. But what, exactly, is the meaning of social subsidiarity?

For the ETUC, the role of management and labour must extend to the negotiation and conclusion of European agreements. The Commission, adds the ESC, must as far as possible leave it to management and labour in Europe to conclude agreements.

France and Portugal also underline the need to reinforce the role played by management and labour at European level. According to France, there must be a more precise definition of the links between the European social negotiations on the one hand and Community and national decisions on the other. For its part, Portugal proposes strengthening participation by the two sides of industry in the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training.

9.2. What is Expected from the European Community in Practical Terms?

9.2.1. Simple Transparency of Qualifications or Formal Recognition?

•Greater transparency is desired, within the context of European mobility

•But the work being carried out by the Commission with a view to formal recognition of qualifications is called into question.

•A more flexible outlook is recommended, enabling better understanding of the qualifications acquired in other countries.

•Proposals are made for the voluntary establishment of a logbook of qualifications allowing workers to win greater recognition of skills based on personal experience.

How can greater transparency of professional qualifications acquired at national level be ensured within the context of occupational and geographical mobility and the new framework of the Single European Market? Should the Community continue along the path of formal recognition among States?

Opinions are very much divided on this issue. Whilst there is a consensus on the need to ensure greater transparency, there is a real outburst against the results of Community action in the field of the formal recognition of professional qualifications (Italy, Germany, United Kingdom).

Only the Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament express an opinion contrary to that of the countries challenging this approach. For the ESC, the objective at European level must be the mutual recognition of professional certificates. And, the Committee adds, there must be a minimum degree of clarity and harmonization.

Several countries seem to adopt a more neutral position, although without it being possible clearly to identify their precise attitude to the question of formal recognition. France calls upon the Commission to "go beyond" the action that it is taking at present, concentrated on the equivalence of qualifications and mutual recognition of certain diplomas.
Portugal suggests greater transparency and "equitable recognition" for training courses at European level. Luxembourg suggests developing "converging training modules", so as to facilitate corporate synergies. Denmark seems to want both transparency and a system for mutual recognition of qualifications, without being very explicit on this subject. For its part, Ireland wishes to pursue a policy of bilateral formal recognition (country by country) of its qualifications.

Three countries, therefore, question the strategy developed by the Commission. Italy is more forthright in its opposition to continuation of the Community drive to establish analytical equivalences between professional qualifications. This it puts down to irreconcilable differences between States.

Several objectives are also outlined.

The first concerns the need to incorporate the professional experience factor in national certification (see point 5.4.).

The second concerns the need only to take account at European level of certificates recognized under national accreditation systems.

The third relates to the need to ensure better information for the employer, so that he can easily check whether the qualifications of a job applicant from another country correspond to his expectations.

The fourth problem concerns the need for better information for would-be mobile workers as to the qualifications required in other countries.

On the basis of these objectives, Germany and the United Kingdom propose practical solutions which converge in so far as their principles are concerned.

- States should undertake to provide professional documents describing in a clear, concise and comprehensible manner for employers the different qualifications acquired at national level.

- A qualifications logbook should allow the worker to highlight the skills derived from experience that he has acquired. The British, who indicate that this proposal is backed by the TUC and the CBI, talk of an individual file summarizing everyone's expertise and experience. This file would be compiled on a voluntary basis.

More specific comments are also made. For instance, it would be useful from a global point of view to identify the information needs of employers and individuals (United Kingdom). Contacts should be established among the bodies and authorities responsible for qualifications in the different Member States (United Kingdom). Improvements in information and transparency should make the employer's choice easier in selection interviews. But the employer can in no circumstances be obliged to recruit a worker simply on the basis of the qualifications logbook or forced to grant him a specific rate of pay (Germany).

Finally, mention should be made of the Danish belief that the establishment of central data bases does not necessarily result in greater transparency.

9.2.2. How Should European Cooperation be Organized from an Operational Stance?

•For some, the Commission should content itself with general and non-binding objectives. For others, however, it should define common action objectives which may go as far as binding measures.

•Among the subjects for action most frequently proposed to the Commission are : anticipating needs, developing support structures for SMEs, promoting efficient advice and guidance services, widening access, supporting less-favoured regions and disadvantaged groups, encouraging investments in training and improving quality.

•As for the means of action recommended, these range from the exchange of information, experiences and individuals to the creation of observatories, the development of analyses, the promotion of ideological debate, etc.

This question elicited a large number of proposals in a wide range of fields. To appreciate the scope of these proposals, we should examine them in the light of the strategic priorities set out by each country and remind ourselves of the substantial divergences among countries

concerning the interpretation of subsidiarity (see point 9.1.). For instance, the same proposal for a Community objective or Community action will take on a totally different meaning depending on whether it is viewed from the angle of restricted or enlarged subsidiarity. We should remember here the broad spectrum of opinions expressed: for some, the Commission must content itself with general, non-binding objectives, whilst for others it must define common action objectives which can go as far as binding decisions.

In our synopsis of these proposals, we no longer include those concerning European transparency of qualifications (see point 9.2.1.). We reserve the following chapter for more specific proposals concerning Community programmes, although there is clearly some common ground between the more general comments and the suggestions concerning programmes.

How should European cooperation be organized? We have classified the proposals made in the contributions into three categories:

- proposals for joint undertakings that should be entered into by each Member State;

- priority subjects on which the Commission's action should be focused;

- the means of action that should be applied by the Commission for tangible results on these priority subjects.

We indicate in brackets the countries to which the different proposals refer. These references are not exhaustive, however, and at this stage, with no major divergences, they are merely indicative.

It should be underlined, finally, that Denmark places special emphasis on the need to extend European cooperation to the EFTA countries and to the Group of 24.

9.2.2.1. Joint Undertakings by the Member States

- Drafting a national report to be presented to the Commission on the results achieved in pursuance of common objectives and recommendations (Germany, United Kingdom).

- Implementing programmes and support measures to develop access to training for disadvantaged groups (Germany).

- Involving management and labour in policy definition and the decision-making process (Germany).

-Avoidance of internal migration by the potential and existing work force of outlying regions, as interest wil inevitably focus on the center with its greater employment potential (Greece)

9.2.2.2. Priority subjects for Community action

Promoting investment in training

- Encouraging employees to become involved in vocational training activities and developing their motivation (Italy, United Kingdom, Spain).

- Encouraging employers to invest in vocational training programmes for their employees

(Italy, United Kingdom). Encouragement must be given to plans and programmes on a company scale (Italy).

Improving quality

The European Community must promote initiatives to improve the quality of national systems (Italy). European experiments in cross-border mobility and exchanges of experiences and information must be pursued, with a view to improving quality (France).

Widening access

Developing support structures for SMEs (Luxembourg, Spain).

Supporting less-favoured regions (Germany).

Supporting particular groups (Economic and Social Committee): the unemployed (Spain, United Kingdom), women seeking their first job or wishing to go back to work (Netherlands), the handicapped (Netherlands), ethnic minorities (Netherlands), workers in sectors undergoing restructuring (European Parliament).

Involving management and labour

Encouragement should be given to the conclusion of tripartite agreements at different levels (Spain). The Commission is called upon to draw up recommendations to support the dialogue between management and labour on regulations relating to collective agreements or company agreements (Germany).

Developing cooperation

Encouraging cooperation among the different parties concerned (Spain).

Career guidance and advice services

Providing opportunities for workers to obtain individualised guidance and assessment (United Kingdom).

Anticipating needs

Establishing common grids for the interpretation of data (France).

9.2.2.3. Community Means of Action

Several types of activity are suggested.

Information

- The Commission should promote collection, dissemination and exchanges: common grids, common criteria, etc. (Germany).

- It should make it possible to compare research on the forecasting of needs, making data compatible (Economic and Social Committee).

- It should develop common data banks (Spain, Portugal) and statistics on education and qualification levels (Spain).

- It should encourage the circulation of information among employees on job vacancies (United Kingdom).

- It should promote information in schools on the labour market and training opportunities (Italy).

- It should encourage the dissemination of information via the mass media (Spain).

- It should present a regular European report on vocational training - based on the national reports provided by the Member States (Germany, United Kingdom).

Several contributions underline the need for the Commission to develop information in the particular field of individualised career guidance and advice services.

Exchanges of experiences and good practices

Stepping up of action in this field is called for (European Parliament) to improve access to training (United Kingdom), to boost investments (Italy) and to improve quality (Italy, Ireland).

Exchanges of individuals

Interest is displayed in teacher and pupil exchanges (Flemish Belgium).

Creation of "observatories"

Especially to monitor demand for training (Italy).

Development of joint training projects

For young people and training of trainers (Luxembourg).

Encouraging ideological debate and exchanges of opinions

Particularly in the field of cooperation among the different parties (Spain).

Supplying analyses

On trends on the job market (European Parliament).

9.3. What are the More Specific Expectations concerning the Community Programmes Generated by the Task Force, the CEDEFOP, Community Initiatives and the European Social Fund?

•Greater complementarity should be established among the programmes generated by the Task Force, so that they are more applicable to the objectives that are seen as having priority.

•More effective added value should be sought and the knock-on effects of these programmes on national systems should be raised.

•There should be more flexibility in the functioning of programmes. Better information should be ensured.

•Finally, some contributions suggest more effective involvement of management and labour.

These expectations are derived from the priority action fields and needs identified with regard to the Commission.

The comments more directly related to Community programmes can be divided into two categories: more general comments concerning the criteria that should be applied to all Community programmes, and more specific remarks concerning such and such a programme, Community initiative or structural fund.

9.3.1. General Criteria

We have identified several tendencies concerning the general criteria that are expected.

More consistency and effectiveness

Greater complementarity should be sought among programmes, which must strive towards the objectives identified as priorities in a consistent manner (European Trade Union Confederation). The ETUC identifies three kinds of programme:

- programmes based on the mechanics of training;
- programmes based on the training environment;
- programmes based on recipients.

There should be an ongoing assessment of the objectives and activities and added value of these programmes (Flemish Belgium, United Kingdom). Attention must also be given, in follow-up activities, to maintaining the contacts and networks established through the programmes.

Finally, greater consistency should be sought between Community programmes and Community initiatives (Flemish Belgium) and with the European Social Fund (Italy).

Denmark, for its part, expresses three wishes: simplification (and even a reduction in the number) of action programmes; a linking up with the Structural Funds which can constitute complementary sources of financing and in particular with the European Social Fund; and more extensive decentralisation (supervision and administration of the funding allocated to programmes should be left in the hands of the national agencies).

Better linkage with the national level

Following the initial stage, which made the different parties aware of the issues involved, it is now advisable to pass on to the second stage which should see a greater knock-on effect by Community programmes on national systems. It is essential to ensure real added value and to generate snowballing effects (France). Community programmes must consist of incentive measures teamed up with national and/or regional measures (European Trade Union Confederation). The objectives of community programmes should be complementary to those of Member States (UK).

Greater flexibility

Several countries call for less bureaucratic, simpler and more flexible procedures at the operational level of programmes. As much energy should be put into the "getting to know one another" stage as into the cooperation itself, emphasizes Flemish Belgium. The time limits are too short, which leads to partnerships being established too hastily, it adds, going on to emphasize that support must be provided for cooperation proposals generated by initiative-takers themselves.

Better information

Better information is expected at several levels. Information on the possibilities offered by the programmes should be disseminated more effectively (Flemish Belgium). Overlapping between information on different programmes should be avoided (United Kingdom). Flemish Belgium suggests creating data banks to facilitate the search for partnerships.

Greater involvement of management and labour

The European Trade Union Confederation calls for a greater role to be played by management and labour. The ETUC considers that they must be regarded not as simple observers or users at a secondary level but as prime movers in the management and utilization of programmes. It should be noted in this respect that in Portugal the two sides of industry will henceforth be better represented on the national committees monitoring the implementation of Community programmes.

Denmark is moreover in favour of fostering transnational cooperation between teaching establishments on the one hand and management and labour on the other, on a large scale, and in the form of integrated exchange visits.

9.3.2. Specific Proposals

Lingua

Several contributions (including that by the European Parliament) suggest that a greater effort should be made to promote the learning of foreign languages through adult vocational training schemes.

Force

The European Parliament confirms its interest in this programme, underlining the relevance of joint projects, especially involving cooperation between SMEs and large companies. The procedures should be simplified and the respective roles of the technical assistance bureau and the national coordination units should be clarified, observes the United Kingdom.

Comett/Erasmus

It would be useful to assess the participation of the EFTA countries (Luxembourg).

CEDEFOP

It is essential to review its tasks (Germany, European Trade Union Confederation) and its operation (ESC).

European Social Fund

Aid from the ESF should not necessarily be directed towards tangible results in terms of employment. It should be linked to the concept of transition, according to Italy.

Francophone Belgium underlines the positive catalyst role played by the ESF, which ideally should focus its action at the crossroads between initial training and continuing training.

PETRA

PETRA activities should be reviewed, to focus more specifically on supporting Member States' activities in training young people. This should include a greater emphasis on the exchange and wider dissemination of good practice.
Greater emphasis should be placed on evaluating the real training outputs of PETRA. The precise notion and value of the "European dimension" needs to be investigated (U.K.).

ANNEX A

List of documents taken into consideration in the synopsis report

It will be recalled that the Commission had fixed a deadline for the end of December 1992 for the submission of contributions. We were able to take account of some documents received in February 1993. UNICE's contribution, which arrived in May, has been incorporated into the document containing the original texts of the contributions.

Furthermore, the documents on which the contributions are based tend to differ from country to country, sometimes with a varying degree of "official" sanction.

In this summary of the documents on which the synopsis is based, we also provide particulars on the national seminars.

Germany

Seminar: October 1 and 2, 1992 in Suhl, on the theme of "the challenges facing European vocational training policy".

Official contribution, drawn up following consultation with the two sides of industry.

Francophone Belgium

Seminar: December 9, 1992 in Brussels.

The contribution (not yet official) comprises the report on the seminar preceded by a general introduction. Four themes are covered: initial and continuing training, professional skills and qualifications, partnerships between the business world and the world of education, and occupational integration strategies.

Flemish Belgium

Seminar: Antwerp, November 16, 1992.

The (unofficial) contribution consists of the report on this seminar, revolving around 10 main points.

Denmark

Seminar: Copenhagen, November 17, 1992.

The official Danish contribution, of January 13, 1993, follows the change of government in this country. This contribution was prepared with the close cooperation of management and labour and the Danish representatives of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training.

Spain

No seminar held.

The official Spanish contribution was based on a formal study among the most relevant parties involved in vocational training.

France

Seminar: within the framework of the meetings at Condorcet (Paris) on September 22, 23 and 24, 1992, on the theme of "Company, Training, Qualification".

The (official) French contribution was the subject of prior tripartite consultation. We have also based ourselves on the report submitted to us on the Condorcet meetings.

Greece

Seminar: December 2 to 4, 1992 in Athens, on the theme of : "Policies for Contemporary Vocational Training and Education".

Official contribution prepared by the governmen but reflecting also the social partner's views.

Ireland

Seminar: October 22 and 23, 1992 in Dublin.

The contribution, prepared by FAS, is based on the report of the conference which discussed the Commission's memorandum on vocational training.

Italy

Seminar: October 23 and 24, 1992 in Sorrento.

Official contribution submitted by the Italian government. We also read the document (communicated by Italy) drawn up by the three main trade unions within the context of the Sorrento conference. We did not find any major divergences between the trade union and government positions and we have not, therefore, made any direct reference to the trade union document.

Luxembourg

Seminar: October 29 and 30 in Luxembourg on the theme of: "Vocational Training Leading to Qualifications: the Key to Successful SME Strategies in the Forthcoming Single Market".

Official Luxembourg contribution submitted.

Netherlands

Seminar: November 25 in Rotterdam.

Official contribution.

The organizers of the seminar conducted a far-reaching survey among the different partners involved in vocational training. We have not received the results of this survey.

Portugal

Seminar: in Sintra, on December 10 and 11, 1992, on the theme of: "The Post-92 Challenge: Concerted Evolution of Vocational Training Systems in a Broader Innovative and Competitive Area".

Official contribution submitted by the IEFP. We also refer to the tripartite agreement of the 30/7/1991.

United Kingdom

Seminar: in London, on September 23 to 25 1992, held within the context of the British Presidency: "Skills for Europe - 1993 and Beyond".
The official contribution deals with the two memoranda: vocational training and distance learning.

European Trade Union Confederation

Seminar held on October 13 and 14 in Luxembourg, on the theme of: "Education and Vocational Training Policy in the European Community for the 90s and Future Prospects Following the Maastricht Agreement".

The ETUC contribution was in three parts: open and distance learning, higher education, and education and training policy after Maastricht. We analyzed the third part.

Economic and Social Committee

Document dated 13/10/92: information report from the section for social, family, education and cultural questions on "vocational training". Rapporteur: Mrs Cassina.

European Parliament

The synopsis focused on the working document of the Committee on Social Affairs, Employment and the Work Environment dealing with the memorandum on vocational training. The Committee's report of March 19, 1993 is reproduced in the part of the document containing the full texts of the contributions.

UNICE

The contribution received in May 1993 is integrated into the document containing the full texts of the contributions.

ANNEX B

Analytical Grid of the National Contributions

1. What "noteworthy" reactions (%) to the memorandum:

1.1. What changes since the memorandum: political, economic, social, demographical, etc.

1.2. What criticisms (broad tendencies) on the memorandum

2. What place for vocational training in relation to education? Links with culture, citizenship? Definition questions...

3. What new proposals and responses from the Member States?

3.1. Strategic objectives: FOR WHOM

3.2. Recently introduced mechanisms and programmes illustrating these finetuned objectives

4. Core questions

4.1. Vocational training FOR WHOM: what groups?

4.2. Vocational training BY WHOM: who should be responsible for what?
- Respective roles of the authorities, the State, employers, trade unions, associations, etc.
- At what geographical level: central State, regions, local level...
- Who is responsible at the different levels of decision-making: general policy, budget, content, certification/ validation

4.3. Professional training: HOW:

- content
- methods
- evaluations
- training location: company, home, educational structures...
- role of training bodies
- training of trainers

5. Qualifications and European mobility

- transparency
- the qualifications market
- developments sought in qualifications/skills

6. Special questions

6.1. Unemployment and exclusion
6.2. Women
6.3. SMEs
6.4. Other

7. Expectations as regards the European Community

7.1. What relations between the European Community and the Member States?

- How is subsidiarity interpreted?
- What value added by the European Community?
- How to reconcile convergence with respect for diversities?

7.2. How to organize the complementarities thus defined on a more operational basis?

- with the different partners in the process (States, regions, trade unions, companies, etc.)
- what levels and what forms of cross-border cooperation (exchange of information, exchange of experiences, consultation on policies, etc.)
- bilateral (customized) cooperation or Community cooperation

7.3. What expectations as regards the Community programmes (TASK FORCE) and the ESF

European Community – Commission

Vocational training in the European Community: Challenges and future outlook
Follow-up to the Commission memorandum on vocational training in the European Community in the 1990s

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

1994 – 72 pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm

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